

Message Text

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SUBJECT: BICENTENNIAL FILM FESTIVAL

REF: A) USIA 22303; B) MOSCOW 12753; C) MOSCOW 11931

1. SUMMARY: EMBOFFS DISCUSSED PROPOSED US BICENTENNIAL FILM FESTIVAL-SEMINAR IN MOSCOW WITH MICHAEL WEBB OF AFI WHO HERE AT INVITATION OF GOSKINO. ACCORDING TO WEBB, SOVIETS ARE SEEKING EXPANDED SALES OF FEATURE FILMS IN US THROUGH FILM EVENT IN CONJUNCTION WITH THEIR 1977 NATIONAL EXHIBIT AND/OR COMMERCIALY-ORIENTED FILM FESTIVAL. AFI DESIRES TO HOST A SOVIET FILM RETROSPECTIVE IN THE US. WE BELIEVE SOVIETS WILL DELAY RESPONDING TO OUR REQUEST FOR NEW DATES FOR US FESTIVAL PENDING OUTCOME OF WEBB VISIT.

2. OUR ASSESSMENT OF SITUATION AT THIS STAGE IS THAT EMBASSY, AFI AND GOSKINO ARE ALL TALKING ABOUT FILM FESTIVALS BUT WITH VARYING PRIMARY GOALS. AFI WANTS TO HOST THE MOST "REPRESENTATIVE" RETROSPECTIVE OF SOVIET FILMS YET SHOWN IN US. GOSKINO'S INTENTIONS ON FILM EVENT(S) MURKY. POINTING TO THEIR "1977 NATIONAL EXHIBIT" IN US

,
THEY SEEK TO TIE IN A FILM EVENT WITH EXHIBIT, WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY REFERRING TO "COMMERCIALY-ORIENTED" FILM FESTIVAL, OBSCURING WHETHER ONE, TWO, OR MORE FILM FESTIVALS ARE IN MIND.

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DEPT/AGENCY AWARE WE HOPE TO STAGE A PRESTIGIOUS EVENT FEATURING

BOTH OUTSTANDING US FILMS AND SEMINARS WITH PROMINENT PERSONALITIES. THERE IS NO REASON WHY ALL THREE GOALS CANNOT BE REALIZED, BUT THERE WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY BE COMPROMISES. END SUMMARY.

3. WEBB WAS INVITED TO USSR BY GOSKINO CHAIRMAN YERMASH DURING "BLUE BIRD" PREMIERE IN WASHINGTON, BUT HEARD NOTHING FURTHER UNTIL AFTER HE DEPARTED ON PRESENT TRIP TO FINLAND AND OTHER COUNTRIES. (IN SPITE OF INVITATION HE IS STILL UNCERTAIN WHETHER GOSKINO WILL PAY FOR HIS INT'L TRAVEL.) WEBB BELIEVES GOSKINO INVITED HIM BECAUSE THEY WERE NOT SATISFIED WITH NEGOTIATIONS FOR A FILM FESTIVAL RELATED TO THEIR "NATIONAL" EXHIBIT PROJECTED FOR NOVEMBER 1977 IN LOS ANGELES. WEBB IS ADVISING THE SOVIETS AGAINST LINKING THE FILM FESTIVAL TO THE "NATIONAL EXHIBIT" AND ALSO TRYING TO PERSUADE THEM THAT ANOTHER FILM EVENT (IN ADDITION TO THE ONE PROPOSED BY AFI FOR 10-12 AMERICAN CITIES) WILL ONLY DETRACT FROM POTENTIAL COMMERCIAL SALES BY OVERLOADING THE MARKET. WEBB IS NOT AT ALL CONVINCED THAT HE CAN PREVAIL OVER THE SOVIET DESIRE TO HAVE A "NATIONAL" FILM EVENT RELATED TO THE EXHIBIT (WHICH WEBB THINKS WILL BE A "BOMB"); GOSKINO'S WISH TO STAGE A COMMERCIALY-ORIENTED FILM FESTIVAL (IF INDEED A SEPARATE EVENT); OR THE STANDING PROHIBITIONS AGAINST THE EXPORT OF SUCH FILMS AS "ZERKALO." FINAL AGREEMENT, AND BASIC GOAL, OF WEBB (WHO HELPED ORGANIZE THE SCREENINGS OF SOVIET FILMS IN SOME 10 AMERICAN CITIES IN THE FALL OF 1975) IS THAT THE MORE SOVIET FILMS HE IS ALLOWED TO SELECT FOR SCREENING, THE BETTER THE RESULTS FOR BOTH AFI AND GOSKINO. HIS CONTENTION IS THAT, BY SHOWING SUCH CONTROVERSIAL FILMS AS "ZERKALO" TO SELECTED AUDIENCES IN MUSEUMS, UNIVERSITIES AND ART THEATRES, HE WILL RAISE RESPECT FOR SOVIET FILMS AND THEREBY ENHANCE THE SALE POTENTIAL.

4. WEBB IS WILLING TO ADVISE AND ASSIST WITH THE PLANS FOR A US FILM FESTIVAL, BUT HE IS NOT WILLING TO MAKE THE AFI PROPOSAL CONTINGENT ON THE STAGING OF A US FESTIVAL; AS WEBB STATED, HE DOES NOT BELIEVE IN "LINKAGE". EMBOFFS ASSURED WEBB THAT WE SUPPORTED AFI INITIATIVES; AT SAME TIME, WE TOLD HIM THAT UNFORTUNATELY "RECIPROCITY" FREQUENTLY SEEMS TO BE ONLY WAY TO ASSURE THAT US CAN REALIZE SUCH EVENTS AS FILM FESTIVAL IN USSR. WEBB BELIEVES, AND EMBASSY AGREES, THAT GOSKINO IS PREPARED TO FACILITATE A US FILM FESTIVAL. HOWEVER, SUCH IMPORTANT DETAILS AS WHAT FILMS WILL BE SHOWN WHERE, WHEN, WHO WILL SEE THEM, COSTS, ETC. REMAIN TO BE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DECIDED.

5. WHILE OFFICIALLY GOSKINO STILL REFUSES TO DISCUSS US FESTIVAL PRIOR TO RESOLUTION OF DATES, EMBOFFS HAVE MET WITH MEMBERS OF GOSKINO'S INSTITUTE OF CINEMATOGRAPHY RESEARCH AND DISCUSSED SEMINAR ANGLE OF US PROPOSAL AT GREAT LENGTH. WHILE EMPHASIZING THAT NO OFFICIAL POSITION WAS BEING REFLECTED, INSTITUTE MEMBERS SHOWED CONSIDERABLE INTEREST IN SCREENING WIDE SELECTION OF US

FILMS PRIOR TO FESTIVAL PROPER, AND LATER MEETING WITH PROMINENT US DIRECTORS SUCH AS ALTMAN, KUBRICK, NICHOLS, AND CAPRA TO DISCUSS FILM MAKING.

6. AFI'S ABILITY TO ASSIST IN ORGANIZATION OF US FESTIVAL WILL BE LIMITED BECAUSE OF THEIR PRIMARY DEPENDENCE ON ARCHIVAL SOURCES. WEBB DID PROMISE THAT ANY SPECIFIC PROPOSAL WOULD BE GIVEN SERIOUS CONSIDERATION BY AFI, BUT HE EMPHASIZED THAT IT WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT TO COUNT ON HAVING MANY RECENT US FILMS WITHOUT THE COOPERATION OF MPAA.

7. UNLESS DEPT/AGENCY ABLE TO CONFIRM READY AVAILABILITY FOR GENERAL SHOWINGS OF FILMS LISTED IN MOSCOW 10520, EMBASSY VIEW-POINT IS THAT COLLABORATION WITH AFI MIGHT BE MOST FEASIBLE WAY TO REALIZE A "PUBLIC" EVENT (I.E. SCREENINGS IN LARGE THEATRE BUT MOST LIKELY TO INVITATIONAL AUDIENCES). THESE "PUBLIC" SCREENINGS WOULD NOT PRETEND TO INCLUDE LATEST FILMS BUT WOULD BE RETROSPECTIVE SAMPLING PULLED TOGETHER BY AFI. EMBASSY WOULD NATURALLY LIKE TO SEE LATEST US FILMS SHOWN TO LARGE GENERAL AUDIENCES, BUT WE DO NOT SEE THIS IN CARDS--AND WE BELIEVE ANY SHOWING OF US FILMS WILL BE HIGHLY POPULAR AND SIGNIFICANT EVENT.

8. SEMINAR PORTION OF FESTIVAL, CLEARLY A NON-COMMERCIAL EVENT, COULD BE FORMAT FOR PRESENTING CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN FILMS. FOR BOTH SOVIET AND US COLLABORATORS, WE COULD ARGUE THAT DECISION-MAKING ON PURCHASES OF FILMS OR ON FUTURE COLLABORATION WILL DEPEND MORE ON OUTCOME OF SEMINARS THAN ON "PUBLIC" SCREENINGS. FINALLY, WITH DISCUSSIONS UNDERWAY WITH AFI AND OTHER POTENTIAL US COLLABORATORS, WE ARE NOT SURE WHAT LEVERAGE WE HAVE WITH GOSKINO AT THIS POINT--ASIDE FROM FACT THAT OTHER WESTERN COUNTRIES HAVE HELD FILM FESTIVALS AND SOVIETS HOPE FOR US PARTICIPATION IN NEXT MOSCOW FILM FESTIVAL.

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9. ACTION: EMBASSY REQUESTS LATEST READING ON AVAILABILITY OF FILMS AND VIPS FOR US FESTIVAL AS ORIGINALLY CONCEIVED; AND SOLICITS DEPT/AGENCY REACTION TO SUGGESTION THAT EMPHASIS BE SHIFTED AWAY FROM "PUBLIC" SCREENINGS, WITH DEPT/AGENCY SEEKING COLLABORATION OF AFI, MPAA, ACADEMY AND OTHERS IN ACQUIRING LATEST FILMS AND PROMINENT PERSONALITIES FOR PARTICIPATION IN SEMINARS. STOESEL

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